

Philosophia (2014) 42:1–23
DOI 10.1007/s11406-013-9474-x

Philosophy as Self-Knowledge

Alfred I. Tauber

Received: 11 July 2013 / Accepted: 14 July 2013 /

Published online: 11 August 2013

© The Author(s) 2013. This article is published with open access at Springerlink.com

Abstract An autobiographical account is offered of how the medical study of self (immunology) became a chapter in the philosophical study of human agency (from Nietzsche and Thoreau to Freud by way of Wittgenstein). Whether viewed scientifically or philosophically, several themes converge on the intractable instability of any notion of selfhood—epistemological or moral. How this problematic motivated an extended analysis of selfhood refracts the psychology of the author and his pursuit of philosophy as self-knowledge.

Keywords Selfhood · Medical ethics · Metchnikoff · Thoreau · Freud · Immunology · Philosophy of science · Moral epistemology

The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments....Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises....Yet in the forum he can make no claim, on the bare ground of his temperament, to superior discernment or authority. There arises thus a certain insincerity in our philosophic discussions: the potentest of all our premises is never mentioned. (James [“Pragmatism” lecture of 1907] 1987, pp. 488–9)

Reflecting on one’s scholarship takes many forms, and while I have offered a more technical review in the past (Tauber 1999a, 2001a), here a more personal account is offered. I begin with an autobiographical fact: In 1987 at age 40, I enjoyed a sabbatical year and faced the choice of further training as a research physician in molecular biology or assuming a more contemplative posture and writing the history

A. I. Tauber (✉)

Department of Philosophy, Boston University, Boston, USA
e-mail: ait@bu.edu

Present Address:

A. I. Tauber
22 Hardy Lane, Boscawen, NH 03303, USA

of my scientific discipline. I chose the latter option. My laboratory was large, well-funded, productive, but ultimately the investigative life was unfulfilling. Why? Even today I cannot identify all the sources of my dissatisfaction, but it seemed obvious to me that I had unfinished business, which could never be addressed in the professional identity I had assumed. I chose a topic close to my scientific expertise and thus commenced researching the origins of immunology, with virtually no understanding of the scope of the project. I simply followed a vague intuition that this was an area ripe for study, and with no clear foresight, I proceeded, ignorant and naïve.

That shift can hardly be characterized as abrupt or even contradictory to my initial professional training. From my earliest intellectual awakenings I have sought ways to link two orientations towards the world—the objective scientific view that would define reality independent of the individual knower and, in stark contrast, the very primacy of the personal point of view from which the world is experienced. While not fully articulated until much later, it seemed to me from a young age that objectivity made subjectivity a problem. So when I finally declared a deviation from the original path I had taken as a scientist, namely, moving from biomedical research to philosophy, I believed that I was completing an arc of discovery consistent with my life-long preoccupations.

The transition from the laboratory to the humanities fulfilled a program whose origins were posed long before. Ostensibly I seemed to be asking, how might a philosophical bridge between my two scholarly activities be constructed? While I knew certain traditional responses, i.e., those offered by Goethe and Coleridge and later by Husserl and post-War commentators, I sought answers framed more particularly by philosophy of science and a more general epistemology. So my publications fall into several domains, which reflect the stages of the transition between the first discipline and the second. Simply viewed, history and philosophy of science (specifically immunology's theory development) served as my formal entry into philosophy; moral philosophy in the form of medical ethics organized my contributions to medicine from a humanistic vantage; and the metaphysics of personal identity, the topic that has intrigued me since my youth, underlay all these efforts. Of course, I could not clearly articulate the goals of these studies as I embarked, but now I can reconstruct the underlying motives that drove me. While apparently disparate, these interests follow an interior logic, or at least a central interest, which I will now present in its various chapters. But first, a brief professional résumé.

I

I trained as a research clinician in Boston at several universities (Tufts, Harvard, and MIT), where I combined the practice of hematology with the biochemistry and cell biology of inflammation. My research began in free radical chemistry and ended in the molecular biology of immune cell receptors. The investigations were wide-ranging—protein isolation, intra-cellular metabolism, enzymology—but I found myself drawn increasingly to larger questions, some of which were frankly metaphysical, while others pertained to the relationship of science to its supporting cultural and intellectual foundations. Busy with my career, I only had time to dip into those literatures; however, after achieving professorial status, my mind wandered back to those earlier interests and so a dormant project was reactivated.

In college I had been driven by the challenge of defining the relationship of science to the humanities. Clearly, I was drawn to two different kinds of reasoning and knowledge. At that stage, I regarded hermeneutics and artistic sensitivity in opposition to the mathematical order offered by physics, chemistry, and the molecularization of biology. That dichotomy proved false and distorting, but in the positivist age in which I grew up, the “Two Cultures” dominated characterizations of the academy and alternatives did not readily present themselves. Indeed, today the myopia by which I beheld apparent diverging pathways does not exactly embarrass me, but it does give me pause to wonder at the shallowness of my earlier worldview...and perhaps my current one as well!

After much agonizing I finally opted for medicine, and focused upon basic research, because I wanted ‘certainty’ at a time in my personal and larger cultural life when very little made much sense. I required more steadfast epistemological foundations than those offered by literature or philosophy. As opposed to interpretive ventures or analytics, I wanted the clarity provided by a biochemical experiment and the supposed confidence of a ‘fact.’ To discover something novel excited me, and at that time, the concrete had great appeal. Introduced to a positivist ideal in elementary school and fortified by the ordeal of learning seemingly countless facts in medical school,¹ I hardly had time to conceive that the science I idealized might have foundations less firm than what I assumed. But little time to contemplate such matters appeared. After all, scientific training, driven by learning basic concepts, mastering a lexicon replete with its own rhetoric, and adjusting to a sociology of practice and rewards does not include understanding the infrastructure that supports the entire enterprise.

Thomas Kuhn was utterly correct when he observed that scientists, by and large, have little appreciation of the history of their field, and I might add, much less its philosophy. Only later did I realize the nebulous borders of laboratory knowledge, and with that recognition a larger skepticism seeped into my ill-formed ideas about truth and objectivity.² So with a growing perspective on the both the sociology of scientific knowledge and its truth claims, I began to appreciate the possibility of closing a circle: Having chosen a scientific career did not necessarily mean that I had forsaken one kind of *knowing* for another. Perhaps they were aspects of a larger whole, whose outlines I wished to better discern? Coincident with achieving my personal goal of doing creative laboratory investigations, the other intellectual vista clearly beckoned. Obviously, the course of my journey had not been anticipated, but I was fortunate to have the opportunity to first divide my professional life between the medical school and the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University (BU), and

¹ A classmate with obviously too much time or suffering a profound obsessiveness claimed we had memorized a minimum of 40,000 facts or factoids. Whether this figure includes the vocabulary, I do not recall.

² As discussed below, with my transition to philosophy and history of science in the late 1980s, I found the forum in which my youthful questions were being exercised. At that time, the Science Wars pitted radical constructivists, who would dismantle the hegemony (if not sanctity) of the scientific enterprise, against erstwhile defenders of the laboratory, who I decided did not fully understand valid aspects of the critics’ arguments. I visited Kuhn and he confessed that he had attempted to rescue objectivity from the grips of the “post-Kuhnians,” whom he had disowned, and following his lead I also sought a middle position between them and those who defended an epistemology that had so clearly achieved Bacon’s original promise (Tauber 2009).

eventually to shift my allegiance to philosophy altogether.³ Few have had such an opportunity, and many opined that I was in the midst of a mid-life crisis. In fact, I was in a mid-life revival.

Careers are lived, not prescribed, as least mine seems to have unfolded with its own *logos*. Clearly, no defined course appeared, and my placement in the academy has an interdisciplinary character, which, for many reasons, I discovered leaves its practitioners homeless. But wanderers have their own charms, most prominently their self-sufficiency. So when I was advised to sit in on the courses of my colleagues (because I had no formal training in philosophy), I gracefully declined, claiming that my autodidact strategy served me better. I suspect they remained highly skeptical of my credentials when I joined the department, and more to the point, resented my invasion of their halls (see note #3). Indeed, Abner Shimony (a well-known philosopher of physics) resigned in protest, in part precipitated by his opposition to my arrival, but probably more aggrieved by Stanley Rosen's appointment. Having a supposed closet Straussian and a professor of medicine join the faculty was simply too much for Shimony to bear. I appreciated Shimony's gesture; at least he was honestly dismissive! He made it quite clear that my election was radically eccentric, i.e., I was a non-professional, which was precisely how I felt as well. The difference was that I considered my naiveté 'charming,' if not generative of new perspectives, and thus invigorating to the academic life of the Philosophy Department. Perhaps I gave myself too much credit, but I proceeded as a senior faculty member and let the chips lay where they had fallen. While I taught graduate and undergraduate courses, reviewed and directed doctoral dissertations, opined about academic policy, and voted on promotions, I had a sparse commitment to the *profession* of philosophy—I wanted to study philosophy to help guide my own quest, one that began with reading Nietzsche in high school and Wittgenstein in medical school. Of course my mission was ill-defined, but that 'confusion' only sustained my efforts.

Notwithstanding my ambiguous professional standing, among others, Daniel Dahlstrom, John Stachel, and Burton Dreben became friends and I often profited from discussions with them. However, only with Dreben did I enjoy a sustained philosophical engagement. His brilliant seminars on Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Carnap, and Austin stand out as the highlight of my 17 years in the department. He confirmed my own skepticism about philosophy and to explore the limits of thought in the analytic tradition appealed to my sense of philosophical rigor. My friendship with Hilary Putnam complemented Dreben's tutelage with a vast scholarship, which exhibited the character of philosophy's ceaseless movement: Because intellectual commitments are open to constant self-criticism, philosophy, by its very character, cannot provide final 'answers.' The futility of finding an 'end-point' struck me as obvious, but many did not share the sentiment. I vividly remember how

³ I resigned my administrative positions at Boston City Hospital in 1991 and in 1993 assumed the Directorship of BU's Center for Philosophy and History of Science; in 1995 I closed my laboratory at the School of Medicine and in 1998 was tenured in philosophy. I continued to practice medicine until 2003 and retired from BU in 2011.

Alasdair MacIntyre, when I quoted Emanuel Levinas' quip—"The best thing about philosophy is that it fails"—stormed off, outraged.

So, given my recessive professional posture, why join the philosophy faculty at all? Opportunism. I learned by teaching; I received guidance for certain technical matters; I had a salary; but by far the most important benefit was the mosaic of voices I assembled by hosting over 800 lecturers at the Boston Colloquium for Philosophy of Science. Through that venue I was educated, for I had more than ample opportunity to absorb the airs of discourse during my tenure as its impresario. Hosting those whom I had read with great benefit (e.g., Cavell, Davidson, Diamond, Hacker, Latour, MacIntyre, Pears, Pippin, Putnam, Quine, Toulmin, Wiggins and many others) was a privilege, but I must admit that it often felt more like intellectual sightseeing than a serious contribution to my own endeavors, which so often wandered off the beaten track. I followed my own interests and made little to do with professional considerations. That aloofness provided me with extraordinary independence and wide latitude to pursue my own course. And this last observation captures my love of philosophy, namely, to follow the "philosopher's desire" (Egginton 2007) wherever it might lead—not for answers, but for better questions. So, let me begin.

II

Metchnikoff and the Origins of Immunology (Tauber and Chernyak 1991) became the first of a trilogy of books on the development of immunology's governing theory (Tauber 1994; Podolsky and Tauber 1997). The underlying issue concerned the role of 'the immune self,' which I considered a powerful metaphor that organized the science of host defense. With the discovery of infectious diseases, pathogens were defined as 'other' and, concomitantly, 'the self' required protection. Immunology became the science that characterized this biological requirement of differentiating self from non-self. I contested that orthodoxy, and suggested instead that the notion of selfhood as a given entity defended through immunity must be replaced with understanding how the immune system *established* that very identity in question. In other words, I argued for subordinating the integrity of the organism (the 'responsibility' of host defense) to the deeper challenge of defining that which must be identified, i.e., the *what* to be defended (2003a). So, *integrity* became subordinated to *identity*.

I explored the theoretical foundations of immunology from the point of view of addressing the problem of how individuality might be established if no core identity already existed. In short, I maintained that selfhood in the immune context arises in an on-going dialectical exchange with the world, a process in which both host and other are defined in relation to each other. Further, I argued that 'the self' failed as originally conceived, but remains entrenched in the discipline's theorizing not only because of its utility to account for various aspects of immune function, but, perhaps more powerfully, because of the evocation of ideas concerning individuality, cognition, and ultimately, personal

identity, which closely approximated cultural understandings of such functions (Tauber 2012a).⁴

The theoretical problem of establishing organismal identity placed immunology in the history of developmental biology and Darwinian evolutionary theory (Gourko et al. 2000; Tauber 2003a), which I then extended to viewing immunology as an ecological science (Tauber 2008a). These disciplinary affiliations appeared at the very birth of the discipline and I traced the evolution of the science from these roots. The background for assuming these positions has been detailed elsewhere (Tauber 2006a), so suffice it to note that this revisionist account builds on an appreciation of what some have called, a ‘new biology,’ where the focus on the individual organism must be complemented with study of the ecology of complex systems and symbiotic relationships (Gilbert et al. 2012). Indeed, the notion of ‘individuality’ is fraught with social meanings, which when extrapolated to biology result in distorted conceptualizations of the relationship of organic parts and wholes.⁵

In sum, I had arrived at my critical conclusions about immune theory for scientific reasons (i.e., internal to the evidence derived from laboratory findings and their interpretation), because the notion of selfhood could not be sustained without an epistemological definition, notwithstanding the pragmatic (heuristic) utility of such a model (Tauber 2000). Accordingly, my analysis of immunology’s guiding theory rested on two principle ideas that were closely connected: 1) no such finite *entity* of ‘selfhood’ exists, nor could immunity be defined in the divisionary terms of *self* and *other*, and 2) the biology of individuality requires a conception that would account for

⁴ Note, the self metaphor has returned to inform social theorizing, where the idea of immunization has been applied to characterizing society. This theoretical extrapolation was first used, at least in America, by Haraway and Martin, and more recently radically has been extended by Sloterdijk, Esposito, Beck, Derrida and Baudrillard. In their writings, the self metaphor (appearing as immunization) originally borrowed from psychology and culture criticism *returns* into the socio-political lexicon to model social theory, namely by the assertion that immunization has become the organizing principle by which contemporary “bio-societies” operate. So immunologists and social theorists find themselves eating from the same trough, but apparently, each is unaware that they share the same *self* metaphor, albeit from two different perspectives (Tauber 2012a).

⁵ In the early modern period, mirroring the appearance of the independent citizen, the notion of the autonomous individual agent framed a biology that was organized around the study of living entities. Anatomical, physiological, and developmental criteria were conceived solely in terms of individuals, and even Darwin regarded aggregates of individuals, the species, as identifiable units in competition with one another. With the understanding that living cells comprised complex organisms, a new orientation slowly developed concerning the integration of physiological processes and anatomic units, but still within the confines of a singular organism that would maintain its autonomy. Only with the emergence of ecology in the second half of the nineteenth century, did organic *systems*—comprised of individuals in cooperative and competitive relationships—complement the individual-based conceptions of the life sciences. This ecological perspective has gained ascendancy and we now appreciate that all organisms live in a complex *dialectical* exchange with the environment and others (Tauber 2008a, 2012a). The notion of *individuality* offers an important means to conceptualize the units of complex systems, but such formulations also impose a constructive order that determines how that larger system is understood. Simply, a subject-object modality of organization inherently restricts a fuller understanding of the organism in its dialectical interchanges with the world. Furthermore, the discovery of widespread symbiosis throughout the animal kingdom (Gilbert and Epel 2009; Douglas 2010) is an important contribution to this new understanding, which supplants the notion of insular individuality of organisms with a conception of inter-active relationships. Indeed, symbiosis has become a core principle of contemporary biology, having replaced an essentialist conception of “individuality” with a conception fitting within the larger systems approach now pushing the life sciences in diverse directions (Gilbert et al. 2012). And these biological precepts apply to our understanding of the social world in which humans create their interactive cultural environment.

the dynamic exchange of organism and environment. This approach to immunology's history has generated wide-ranging comment from both scientists and philosophers (e.g., Pradeu 2012), and so I regard my research as contributing to the new field of philosophy of immunology.

As I have observed before (2006a) and reiterate here, the underlying philosophical orientations that lie at the seat of my interpretations appear again and again to orient my critical writings. If I was drawn to the constellation of these issues by the question of what constitutes identity, or how it might be understood, then a close bridge to personal identity immediately suggests both a philosophical orientation and an emotional affinity to the topic. Conceptually, I resisted the radical reductionism that had characterized the life sciences, for as a physician, I appreciated that a holistic framework more effectively captured dynamic aspects of the organism. And as for the emotional component, I have often reflected on the observations made by Fichte, Nietzsche, James and others about the resonance between personality and the philosophy elaborated.⁶ As discussed below, this notion of philosophy as self-reflection will be elaborated and suffice it to note here that as I appreciated the uncertainty of the self as a philosophical or psychological construct, I found no epistemological grounding in the science, either. In a sense, this proved an ironic outcome, given my earlier expectations about a career in science and what I hoped to find there. In any case, with this platform further science studies quickly fell into place.

III

Metchnikoff's descriptive biology clashed with the reductionism of late 19th century physiology, and more deeply he resisted the positivism of the age. Science he embraced, but one unbounded by the philosophical strictures of the day. Captivated by his creativity and fecundity of his insights, I returned to a wider examination of the rise of positivism in the life sciences and the professionalization of biology in the mid-nineteenth century. (These were the same sources of my Metchnikoff studies and the polemics aroused by his theory of immunity.) Given my persistent interest in the notion of selfhood, I further examined positivism as a particular aspect of the subject-object relationship, and chose to develop a portrait of the knowing agent organized around the fact-value problem as developed in the romantic era. This work, *Henry David Thoreau and the Moral Agency of Knowing* (Tauber 2001b), like *Metchnikoff*, also took form as an intellectual biography.

⁶ "It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He *trusts* his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. He feels men of opposite temper to be out of key with the world's character, and in his heart considers them incompetent and 'not in it,' in the philosophic business, even though they may far excel him in dialectical ability.... Most of us have, of course, no very definite intellectual temperament, we are a mixture of opposite ingredients, each one present very moderately. We hardly know our own preferences in abstract matters; some of us are easily talked out of them, and end by following the fashion or taking up with the beliefs of the most impressive philosopher in our neighborhood, whoever he may be. But the one thing that has *counted* so far in philosophy is that a man should *see* things, see them straight in his own peculiar way, and be dissatisfied with any opposite way of seeing them. There is no reason to suppose that this strong temperamental vision is from now onward to count no longer in the history of man's beliefs" (James 1987, pp. 488–9).

Thoreau's transcendentalism, the dominant genre of American romanticism, does not qualify as a philosophical system, but it did embed a philosophical problem: the imbroglio of the subject-object divide, which took the form of how to translate scientific knowledge into personal meaning. Thoreau proceeded by deliberately placing his natural history in relation to different kinds of knowing (colored by moral and emotional feelings). His reaction to the ascendancy of new forms of objectivity offered a case example of how science might be contextualized within its larger humanistic meanings, i.e., a picture of reality integrated by human subjectivity. His effort did not pit scientific ways of knowing *against* competing epistemologies, and instead he pursued an integrative project in which other dimensions of experience might cohere within the reality offered by empirical observations, the modality in which Thoreau worked as a "natural philosopher."⁷

Thoreau has been cited as an early conservationist and ecologist, but his romanticism dominated his view of nature. With an astute sense of detail and a poetic eye, he sought to create the world in which he lived, one imbued with an aesthetic and spiritual sensibilities. Asserting the primacy of his own knowing, *what* he saw was determined by *how* he saw, which in turn was a product of the value bestowed on the object of scrutiny, or as he proclaimed, "This world is but the canvass to our imaginations" (Thoreau 1980, p. 292). To see the world as beautiful and spiritual, Thoreau placed lenses of enhanced sensibility before his eyes, both to focus his sight and filter it. Thus the very act of observing became "a moral test," a test of his values and his ability to live by them. We can follow in his extensive journal how he composed nature in a personal format, taking what he required to present a picture of the world, and of himself within it. The individuality he espoused was the *sine qua non* of the entire project. In short, instead of objectivity's "view from nowhere," Thoreau proclaimed the primacy of precisely his own vision. Accordingly, his science became a *poesis*.

When Thoreau declared in *Walden* that "our entire whole life is startling moral" (Thoreau 1971, p. 218), he meant moral in the sense of human-valued, human-centered, human-derived, human-constructed, and human-intended. His humanism places the self on a set of coordinates defined by several axes: Just as space is geometrically defined by three vectors in simple geometry, so too might we draw a "space" by "vectors" which analogously define the coordinates of Thoreau's experience: 1) the aesthetic imagination, 2) the imperative of attention, and 3) the psychology of self-awareness. Their meeting, at the origin of the vectors that delineate this metaphorical space, are joined by a value-laden consciousness that guides each faculty as it probes its intention. Here, we find scientific thinking participating as one faculty among several to help form that composite we call, "the world," one that is imbued with significance. For Thoreau, to segregate the

⁷ The term, *scientist*, was proposed in 1840 by William Whewell, whose original connotations pointed towards the technical (and commercial) application of scientific knowledge, as opposed to the older philosophical origins. Only towards the end of the century did 'scientist' assume its present meanings (Tauber 2009 p. 65).

self from the world—as some separate entity—defrauds philosophy’s own quest, for a world without human value has lost human significance.

The epistemology Thoreau created to deal with the effort to better integrate himself in various dimensions of experience found expression in terms of a newly formulated ‘individualism’ (de Tocqueville’s newly dubbed term for such persons [Tauber 2005a, b, p. 90]). Individuality in this Emersonian tradition asserted the dual primacy of personal experience in terms of 1) deliberate self-awareness of the separation of self and the world (Tauber 2006c), and 2) the assertion of values that made experience meaningful. When Thoreau wrote, “I was unexpectedly struck with the beauty of an apple tree—The perception of beauty is a moral test” (Thoreau 1997, p. 120), he explicitly assigned himself the *responsibility* of choosing an epistemological strategy that would better integrate himself within a natural context *and* to give that experience *meaning*. Thus to *see* becomes an achievement.

I embraced Thoreau’s imaginative individuality, in which he made the ordinary extraordinary, as a powerful antidote to the nihilism born in his era and to the postmodern suspicions of individual autonomy so current in our own. So while my *Thoreau* placed 19th century natural history at the center of the book’s thematic concerns (and thus qualifying as a work in the history of science [Rossi 2003]), I regarded this work as more of a philosophical commentary on ‘moral agency,’ by which I meant how the self-conscious adoption of a value system informs and guides that which we know and how that knowledge is used. This so-called “moral epistemology” informed much of the thematic orientation of my later work, which revolved around the philosophical problem of personal identity (Tauber 2012b). Indeed, I regard *Thoreau* as the best expression of my larger philosophical vision and the orientation articulated there has guided my later work.

IV

The *self* in the Cartesian schema captures the commonsensical notion of a *me* conceived as demarcated from the world and forming some integral wholeness unto itself. This ‘entity’ or “punctual self” (Taylor 1989) connotes a ‘thing’ understood as an object. Accordingly, personal identity is configured by the indexical identity of a ‘me’ or ‘I’ conferring spatial, temporal, and relational structure to ‘my being in the world.’ In this formulation, a Cartesian-inspired *ego* resides in the world and negotiates its desires as an individual (see note #5). Yet Hume had powerfully argued that the ‘me’ of personal identity morphs from moment to moment and thus the *I* is *non-identical* to itself. The ‘I’ of self-consciousness fleetingly holds experience, and psychological identity then resides in on-going dialogue of various kinds in which the agent becomes an identity *within* social intercourse. Note, no essential (or final) identity holds in such a dynamic. The self in this formulation forfeits a core *essence*, and despite Kant’s attempt to establish the conditions required for cohesive experience and the basis for an “apperception of the ego,” Hegel emphasized the dynamics of exchange, where identity emerges in relationship with an ‘other.’ That shift

proved monumental as later romantics explored the uncertain borders and grounding of the knowing agent.⁸ Indeed, from the vantage of my own scholarship, I realized how the subject-object dichotomy of positivism, which purportedly provides for the objectivity of science, betrays the irreducibility of perspective; and without a firm epistemological foundation of the knowing subject, both objectivity and subjectivity became ‘problems.’

Despite “the embarrassment of self-consciousness” (Tauber 2009, p. 185), which refers to recognizing the lingering effects of Cartesian metaphysics (the persistent separation of mind and the world) and the consequent failure to radically replace that isolated ego, Thoreau nevertheless persisted in his romantic venture to appreciate nature within a multi-dimensional matrix organized by an aesthetic-spiritual-moral sensibility. That he recognized identity as a *problem* immediately turned him from a naturalist to an idiosyncratic philosopher, whose alliance with Emerson made the knowing agent, whether considered epistemologically or morally, the central issue of their diverse writings (Tauber 2003b, 2012b). On their view, individuality became an *achievement*, the due process of an acute self-consciousness guided by deliberate purpose.

Although I cannot precisely re-create the intellectual calculus that brought my understanding of romanticism into such close alignment with my critical inquiries, I must note the repeated appearance of the romantic formulation of personal identity as the conceptual key to the set of issues with which I wrestled. Also, I now appreciate how my criticism of the extrapolation of selfhood from psychology and philosophy into the science of immunology relates less to a refutation of ‘the immune self’ metaphor per se, than a criticism of the Cartesian genus of selfhood that had been appropriated. Simply, while I rejected the conception of ‘the immune self’ as *entity*, I had endorsed another notion of identity. One might even say that I told the same story from two different perspectives and in two unrelated languages.

Science and the Quest for Meaning (Tauber 2009) extended the humanistic message of *Thoreau*. Finding the limits of knowledge and assessing truth claims are on-going philosophical concerns of practicing scientists, but for me, science’s quest for truth remained tethered to a deeper commitment, namely, the search for meaning (Dewey 1927). While the pursuit of truth must never be compromised, that transit to knowing the world is comprised of different faculties that must be acknowledged and integrated to fulfill its ultimate mission of helping to formulate meaning.

Reviewing the demise of positivism as a governing philosophy of science, I described how science is unified neither in its methods, its standards, nor its interpretative strategies; that its various epistemologies fail any final form of objectivity; that theories and models evolve from loose creative strategies; and that the pragmatic assembly of

⁸ The Hegelian ‘relational’ understanding of agency characterizes subjects living in and delineated by their relationships, which define and ultimately frame their behavior and character. Accordingly, the Cartesian *cogito*, the given core identity of the modernist self, has been displaced by a dialectical process of self-recognition in exchange with an ‘other.’ So, in dialogue with the other (another person, nature, the divine, etc.) the individual is identified within that relationship. And in Kierkegaard’s extension, the self’s self-reflection in self-consciousness becomes a reflection upon itself and, again, a core identification has been forfeited (Tauber 2006c).

facts relies on varying degrees of certainty and interpretative facility.⁹ Simply, the values of science allow investigative findings to find their rightful place as scientific data and their use in theory development. Typically, philosophers of science regard that exercise as placing facts within broader conceptual theories or models. However, I saw the ‘fluidity’ of the value structure of science opening a larger vista. I was less concerned with the more restricted epistemic functions of diverse values than understanding the wider non-epistemic universe in which values structure knowledge within the context of what Michael Polanyi called, “personal knowledge” (1962). Polanyi’s concerns focused upon the limits of positivism; I wished to go further and argued that the project to reject the irrational and mystical need not necessarily discard the subjective.

By presenting a general overview of positivism’s fall, I offered an account of how science as a *cultural* product must be studied in its social contexts, as well as examined to understand how its findings contribute to the placement of humans in their natural, social, and existential domains. Whether posed in terms of assessing social policy, defining normative modes of thinking, acknowledging the cognitive role of emotional intelligence, composing the heuristics of rationality, articulating the moral dimensions of knowledge, and so on, all approaches converge on describing the objective-subjective spectrum as a continuum of intelligence, broadly construed. *Quest* thus presented a broadly conceived portrait of science as part of the larger Western dilemma of integrating self and other, objectivity and subjectivity, individual belief and communal knowledge, with each dipole understood as balanced within the supporting cultural context. Specifically, I sought to balance the pre-occupation of placing contemporary science in its Baconian tradition of mastering nature with the older origins of scientific inquiry as an expression of meta-physical wonder. I framed that recalibration as requiring a synthesis of scientific objective findings with personal signification. Indeed, because epistemology drives our metaphysics, I have been oriented by ‘science’ in its older designation of ‘natural philosophy,’ a field of inquiry that must find its rightful place in philosophy writ large.

⁹ The blurring of the fact/value dichotomy, both within the laboratory and outside, represents the overriding characteristic of post-positivist science. This position argues that a relaxation of the rigid fact/value dichotomy recognizes that science continually evolves diverse value judgments regarding its own practice that are never steadfast, but always changing in response to new demands and contexts. Chosen and developed, they hardly stand stable. No formal, final method exists to define fact/value relationships. The notion of an insular “fact” belies how facts are so co-mingled with the values and theories in which they are embedded that to disentangle the relative roles of these supports becomes a highly convoluted, and sometimes an irresolvable, endeavor (Putnam 1990, p. 141).

So-called value-free science adopts three basic claims concerning the construction and use of facts (Kincaid et al. 2007, p.13): Objective science never pre-supposes non-epistemic values 1) in determining what the evidence is or how strong it is; 2) in providing and assessing the epistemic status of explanation; nor 3) in determining the problems scientists address. Each of those assertions, over a wide spectrum of arguments, has been challenged (McMullin 1983; Proctor 1991; Putnam 2002; Tauber 2009). When theory and fact conflict, sometimes one is given up, sometimes the other, and the choice as often as not is made “aesthetically,” by adopting what appears to be the simplest, the most parsimonious, or elegant, or coherent—qualities which themselves are *values*. These are what Hilary Putnam calls *action-guiding* terms, the vocabulary of justification, also historically conditioned and subject to the same debates concerning the conception of rationality. The attempt to restrict coherence and simplicity to predictive theories is self-refuting, for the very logic required even to argue such a case depends on intellectual interests unrelated to prediction as such. In short, by dispelling the intellectual hubris of the scientific attitude we are left with a more dynamic, albeit less formal, understanding.

V

These intriguing problems—the value structure of science and the effort to find coherence in a world fragmented by competing notions of truth—have carried me into topics that require a critical appraisal of our ethics, broadly understood. And given the particulars of my career, these interests directly arose from the challenge of practicing humane medicine. Research-clinicians face the daily task of integrating the employment of a scientific medicine with the imperative of offering empathetic care, and in *Confessions of a Medicine Man* (Tauber 1999b), I explored the emotional and moral tensions that resulted in what so easily became technocratic-commoditized medical practice. This short ethical treatise, sprinkled with autobiographical vignettes, testified to my own professional awakening to the physician's moral identity, which I further explored in a more orthodox medical ethics study of the doctor-patient relationship posed in terms of patient autonomy (Tauber 2005a). In the setting of clinical medicine, the deliberate effort to address the imperative of care guided my own understanding of doctoring. Indeed, the application of science and technology only represented the tools of that responsibility, where *response* to the other, very much in the way Levinas posed the ethical encounter, grounded my thinking and *praxis* (Tauber 1995a).¹⁰

Plainly, my clinical experience had a profound influence on my philosophical studies, indeed, far more than the more formal analyses of immunology's theory.¹¹ The deeper themes with which I have engaged emerged from moral philosophy. Specifically, I joined a few scattered voices that have proclaimed the primacy of medicine's moral agenda, by arguing that medicine's imperative of care placed science and technology subordinate to the ethical enterprise. In other words, a philosophy of medicine must be articulated as a "moral-epistemology" (Tauber 2005b, 2006b, 2008b) and thus what passed for medical ethics was largely a judicial enterprise and what most concerned the diverse philosophers of medicine was a superficial gloss of the deeper problems besetting medicine.

The cluster of issues considered in my medical ethics books examined the development of contemporary medicine from its late 19th century origins as a chronicle of a shifting ethical structure resulting from the historical evolution, and eventual dominance, of science-based clinical practice. And circling back, my *Thoreau* provided the historical background in which the philosophical challenge of positivism first appeared. Thus the critical appraisal developed in *Thoreau* articulated the intuition that guided my portrayal of medicine's moral philosophy. And of course the underlying *thought* of all of these works rests on a particular understanding of personal identity (whether designated as the self, the subject, the agent, or the person), whose conceptualization has organized all my subsequent writings.

So *Thoreau*, a study at the interface of epistemology and moral agency, offered a formal analysis of the imbroglio described in my *Confessions*, where the challenge of

¹⁰ I see Levinas' secular philosophy closely aligned with, and informed by, his Jewish religiosity (Tauber 1998), and correspondingly, my own general orientation is undoubtedly deeply influenced by my Jewish identity. However, this issue is not addressed here.

¹¹ While my writings on immunology are more philosophically informed than the accounts of other scientist colleagues, I am well aware that the boundary between the science and the philosophy of this work is often obscure. Simply stated, immunology had not previously been subject to philosophical analyses and my early essays and books, given the lacuna of such analyses and the state of my own sophistication, represent a relatively small step in my intellectual evolution; more recent essays about immunology express deeper philosophical insight (e.g. Tauber 2013a).

melding various kinds of knowledge and knitting together several identities underlay this commentary on American health care and the ethics of medicine. As I reconstruct the development of my thought, I now see that these two works together served as coupled intellectual vehicles, which carried me from one professional identity to another. I wrote the first draft of *Confessions* in 11 intense days, and for a year I immersed myself in Thoreau's *Journals*, which became my own repository. Truly, the two-year period beginning in mid-1997 stands out as the most intense and exciting period of my intellectual career, and my *Thoreau*, although largely ignored, remains, at least for me, my most creative achievement. Its steadfast resistance to an alienating nihilism and the postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity continues to serve as my pole star as I have trudged across the landscape dotted with the corpses of the Enlightenment's retreat.

VI

My next turn, moving from Thoreau to Freud, may seem a long leap, but the steps are easily tracked. Most directly, Freud drew my attention because of the commonly held belief that psychoanalysis provides the most influential understanding of selfhood in our own era. That supposition proved both true and false: Correct in the general sense that we are all *Freudians*, i.e., in recognizing that we are strangers to ourselves, we require elucidation of hidden motives, so at that interface between the 'intelligent' and the 'emotional,' Freud introduced a new kind of insecurity about self-knowledge. However, the assumption about Freud's elucidation of the *self* proved false, because to my astonishment, Freud never employed the word *Selbst* (self) in his entire opus (Tauber 2010, p. 266, n. 13)! Indeed, selfhood considered in any formal sense eclipsed his interest (Tauber 2010, pp. 184–92). After all, from the psychoanalytical perspective, Freud had focused his efforts on the unconscious, not the conscious ego, and only later theorists made the *person* the center of their versions of revised Freudianism (Tauber 2010, pp. 268–70). So the vapors of self-(or ego-) psychology, which I had inhaled since the 1970s, were not those coming from Papa Freud's cigar, and to my consternation, appropriating Freud for my own thematic interests required a revision of my initial plans. And in that exercise something interesting emerged.

After recovering from what I considered a profound irony, I found that Freud's original formulations were far richer for my purposes than the later psychoanalytic derivatives that followed him. And, consistent with my interests, the powerful correspondence between psychoanalysis and romantic individuality drew me forward. Well aware of other scholarly work in this area (e.g. Kirschner 1996), my concerns were quite different from theirs:

- 1) Ethics—Freud's presentation of reality as the achievement of a dynamic struggle between fantasy and a worldly reality drew from the same romantic roots I had discerned in Thoreau. In psychoanalysis, the negotiation between desire and a fulfilling or obstructing 'other' may result in success or failure, but the confrontation of self-knowing itself echoed the heroic character of establishing identity. Fighting fate in the endless process of reaching what Kant called "maturity" (Kant 1996c) and Thoreau described as living a "deliberative life" (Thoreau 1971; Tauber 2001a, b, pp. 163ff.) reflected the same version of moral stature at the base of psychoanalysis (Tauber 2010, pp. 205ff.).

- 2) Epistemology—Thoreau and Freud each drew from a Kantian epistemology, where ‘reality’ is a cognitive product of the mind organizing its perceptions of the world through an *active* synthesis of sensory data through particular mental faculties. In that schema, *representations* served as the métier of the cognitive product. While Thoreau closely followed this construction (Tauber 2001a, b, p. 152), he sought to add the missing subjective component,¹² and Freud applied Kant’s representational model of the mind to inner psychic states. For Freud, repressed *ideas* served as the psychic ‘representations’ of thwarted desire, and psychoanalysis, reaching into the unconscious, would discern those ‘ideas’ and thereby reveal their origin and affiliation to psychic trauma. In that analysis, emotional distress would be relieved. Asserting that philosophical posture left psychoanalysis fully exposed to later criticism directed precisely at the representational construct (Tauber 2013b).
- 3) Metaphysics—Freud and Kant each recognized the same philosophical paradox of human life, namely, we are determined and yet free. Kant asserted that humans live in the natural world and thus subject to natural causation and at the same time, because of autonomous reason, we are free (and thus responsible) for moral choice.¹³ Freudian metaphysics arose from the same dual appreciation, more specifically, naturalistic unconscious forces drive towards their own deterministic ends and at the same time humans possess the faculty of autonomous reason, which allows scrutiny of the emotional shackles that ensnare rationality. That we are determined rests at the core of psychoanalytic theory, but at the same time Freud invoked the freedom of self-knowledge as the source of liberation. “Maturity” (the proper use of Reason) was the exercise of that freedom, and on this platform I traced the abiding value of Freudianism.

While these parallels and cross-references between Kant, Thoreau, and Freud emerged as the project developed, the more obvious origins of my attention to Freud came from a general intuition: If my *Thoreau* focused on the introspective self in its romantic incarnation, wouldn’t psychoanalysis offer the most important twentieth-century formulation of the same problematic? In other words, while I embarked on my study of Freud with a full appreciation of his Enlightenment commitments, I also saw how his notions of agency stretched romantic agency into our own period. After all, the romantic understanding of subjectivity had organized all of my writings no matter in which venue the issue appeared. I now see that the first of the two-volume

¹² “I think the man of science makes this mistake, and the mass of mankind along with him: that you should coolly give your chief attention to the phenomenon which excites you as something independent on you, and not as it is related to you. The important fact is its effect on me. He thinks that I have no business to see anything else but just what he defines the rainbow to be, but...it is the subject of the vision, the truth alone that concerns me. The philosopher for whom rainbows, etc., can be explained away never saw them. With regard to such objects, I find it is not they themselves (with which men of science deal) that concern me; the point of interest is somewhere *between* me and the objects.” (Thoreau 1962, 10: 164–5).

¹³ At the end of Kant’s *Second Critique*, he famously mused on the mystery of Reason’s ability to bridge the moral and natural domains: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence,the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not need to search for them and seek them as though they were veiled in obscurity or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my own existence” (1996a, p. 269). Kant (in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*) accepted the immediate reality of both aspects of human nature, and even though freedom appears to contradict nature, one must think of oneself in both modalities (both free and subject to nature’s laws), because they are “*necessarily united* in the same subject” (Kant 1996b, p. 102; emphasis in original).

study I wrote on Freud bore this romantic template (Tauber 2010), but my second book destabilized it (Tauber 2013b). I conclude with reflections on this conflict.

VII

After reading Freud for almost half a century, I finally accepted the challenge of offering my own interpretation of his thought and in *Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher* (Tauber 2010), I probed the philosophical infra-structure of psychoanalytic theory. This book placed Freud within the German philosophical context of the period in which his theory took form. In hypothetical dialogue with Neo-Kantians, positivists, historicists, Nietzsche, Brentano,¹⁴ and Wittgenstein, I presented Freud's epistemological and metaphysical commitments and thereby sought to expose the fault lines that would eventually crack his theory's foundations and ultimately spell its collapse. In this imagined debate, I portrayed him neither as a systematic philosopher nor the positivist scientist he hoped to be, but rather as a humanist.

Psychoanalysis seeks to establish a causative sequence to reconstruct unconscious states and follow the pathways of their effects in behavior and affects. This project, steeped in the scientific metaphysics of cause and effect, originated in Freud's materialism upon which his *science* rested, where the unconscious exhibits demands that will not (can not) be denied by "the proud superstructure of the mind" (Freud 1919, p. 260). This deterministic formulation became the central tenet of Freudianism, and wherever in his writings Freud discusses free will, he admonishes readers who assert their belief in such freedom as harboring a deep illusion (Tauber 2010, pp. 139ff).

Yet a tension resides at the base of the theory: In the province of consciousness—where recognition, reflection, reason, and resolve all reside—choice has the putative potential of being exercised. This is Freud's unacknowledged realm of free will, which is derived from his humanism and functions within a second metaphysics, one that Kant called autonomy (Tauber 2010, pp. 125ff.). Psychoanalysis thus builds upon the ability of reason, albeit with emotional reconciliation, to reveal the secrets of unconscious drives and thereby better to live with them: "Analysis does not set out to make pathological reactions impossible, but to give the patient's ego the *freedom* to decide one way or the other" (Freud 1923, p. 50; emphasis in original). And herein lies the inescapable paradox of Freud's theory already mentioned: we are determined, yet we are free to recognize the emotional shackles of human bondage, which is the only freedom humans possess (Tauber 2010, pp. 217-9).

When the science and clinical aspects of psychoanalysis are subordinated to understanding the *ethics* of such an inquiry, Freud appears as one who believed in the power of reason, the autonomy of the individual, and the potential for assuming ultimate responsibility for human being. Balancing a well-acknowledged pessimism (Dienstag 2006), he still offered a way of understanding the psyche, which he put to work as

¹⁴ Franz Brentano occupies a distinct position in this intellectual drama, because he was Freud's mentor at the University of Vienna and profoundly influenced Freud's thinking, in particular his conception of intentionality. In a variant of the Oedipus drama, Freud rejected Brentano's philosophy of *conscious* mind for an analysis directed at *unconsciousness* and thus requiring a radically different kind of study, but the intentional structure of his theory is self-evidently indebted to Brentano (Tauber 2010, pp. 40–53). Despite this crucial indebtedness, we find only one passing mention of Brentano in Freud's writings.

psychotherapy. In that effort he sided with humanistic optimism, working to redeem his patients from their suffering. On this account, psychoanalysis as a modality of self-identification shifts Freudianism from a clinical discipline to a type of moral inquiry. “Moral” in this context refers to all those components that contribute to formulating the needs, values, and normative basis of behavior and emotional wellbeing.

The perspective drawn on that shift—one derived from a scientism that would defend the applicability of assigning some objective status to inner mental states and a philosophical argument denying such an application—depicts the larger context in which objectivity is situated and employed. Placed in this discussion, psychoanalysis joins a larger interdisciplinary discussion about what constitutes *knowledge*. At the time Freud wrote *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), a major debate ensued in Germany about the character of the human sciences in relation to the natural sciences on the axis of explanation (*erklären*) (exemplified by the natural sciences) and understanding (*verstehen*) (interpretive methods broadly construed) (Tauber 2010, p. 88–93). So the same issues focusing Thoreau’s main concern in the mid-19th century, had, by the end of the century, aroused heated debate. In this regard, psychoanalysis found itself at the hub of a larger struggle. With the question of legitimate knowledge at stake, the character of the knowing agent became the key component in adjudicating what kind of knowledge would claim legitimacy and on what basis.

So, again, the quandary of adjudicating different kinds of knowing, which had dominated my own career choices and motivated my entry into philosophy, focused my scholarship. And linked to that epistemological issue loomed the closely related problem of how to conceive selfhood. As already noted, that problem had, indeed, grounded my various inquiries and the study of Freud provided the most ambitious stage upon which to explore my most intimate project.

VIII

The question, *Who* is the subject?, dominated intellectual deliberation well into the inter-War period and beyond.¹⁵ As the last great metaphysician of modernity, Freud asked the cardinal question, namely, will the humanism he hoped to protect be saved in the face of the growing hegemony of positivist epistemologies marking legitimate knowledge, or will subjectivity so defined be replaced by a new formulation? Postmodernism declares that subjectivity has been redefined. Following my argument for a broadened epistemology in the face of positivism’s fall (Tauber 2009), I firmly placed Freud on the modernist side of the humanist/post-humanist divide.

While the blurb proclaimed that my *Freud* “caused one to rethink an entire field” and thus “the most important book on the shape of Freud’s thought in recent times,” a colleague, who knew the full scope of my publications, acutely observed that the study, irrespective of its public impact, was not really about Freud or Freudianism at all! For him, the book was “a most interesting study of Tauber.”¹⁶ I have already acknowledged my “scholarship as self-knowledge” (Tauber 2006a), and I fully

¹⁵ For example, the theme, “What is Man?” organized the celebrated 1929 Davos debate between Ernst Cassirer, a modernist who might well have served as Freud’s proxy, and Martin Heidegger. Their confrontation has been regarded as a dramatic turning point in twentieth century philosophy (Gordon 2010).

¹⁶ A similar comment about the autobiographical character of my study was also made in a review of the book (Young-Bruehl 2011).

recognize (as the epigram to this paper announces) the personal character of philosophy. I offer no defense, but rather accept the intimate exercise of *character* in my writings. Given my motivations and understanding of the philosopher's desire, the personal dimension must appear. More, I embrace this vision of philosophy's mandate, one that originates with its earliest conception—"know thyself." In this light, the intellectual stakes appear higher and the passion of the inquiry correspondingly increases. Yes, this scholarship excites me, and if the subterranean currents that direct my work have been fully exposed, I must accept those risks and proceed.

As I wrestled with Freud's great attempt to decipher identity, I also recognized his magnificent failure. I would have to directly confront an on-going inner disquiet: The rational agent, the heroic individual, the self-conscious *I* had been battered by the onslaught of philosophers of the post-Freudian era. Indeed, Freud worked at the historical inflection point that marked modernity's slide into postmodernity. I decided to tell that story in large measure to either expel the skepticism raised by my reading of that literature (a pre-occupation of mine since medical school) or change my romantic understanding of agency. In fact, the book, *Requiem for the Ego: Freud and the Origins of Postmodernism* (Tauber 2013b) became an attempt to complete a collegiate thesis that I knew had woefully failed in its agenda. Truly, I had only asked a single question, *Who am I?*¹⁷

During college, the effort of reconciling the intellectual dilemma discussed in the first section of this essay took the form of situating the place of mythical thinking in our scientific age. That early study of different forms of reason was organized around readings of Ernst Cassirer (*Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*), Claude Levi-Strauss (*The Savage Mind* and *Totemism*), Freud, and a variety of his commentators (Herbert Marcuse, Philip Rieff, and Norman O. Brown). All too evident, this sophomore attempt at a grand synthesis was appropriately commented on by my advisor as "the work of a lifetime" as he bid my adieu. He might have made my task more direct and focused had he suggested that I read Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, but I suspect as a specialist in Tudor literature he had no knowledge of the Frankfurt School. More, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* had not been translated into English until after I had graduated from college (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972)! In any case, I regard *Requiem* a direct descendent of this unfinished project—a cloth of many threads to unwind and reweave.

The last words of *Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher* pointed to the next generation of philosophers who, although recognizing the significance of his work, were reluctant to follow his modernism. Given the breadth of the issues, I found myself pushing in one direction then another in the attempt to define the key theme that would structure what I considered an ambitious synthesis of 20th century philosophy around my interests. During a seemingly long incubation of sorting out my ideas, I had a fecund dream:

I was given the choice of playing a game, similar to the television game shows of goods and fortune. Of the various options on a board, I chose a safe, which when presented to me had a dial with the usual numbers (similar to one that I own) and a

¹⁷ As plainly seen, this latest work addressed the subject of my very first published school essay at age 14 entitled, "The Mask," which addressed the authenticity of self-presentation to the world and to oneself. I find this remnant of my earliest thinking on the subject only interesting inasmuch as it shows that the problem of personal identity has guided my philosophical inquiry from its earliest, naïve inception.

handle with a second dial. I studied the dial and swirled it, but soon realized that I could not discern the correct combination. As I looked more carefully, I saw that the dial was held in place by two pins, the top one somewhat loosened. I then realized that I could simply pull it out of the door. I then removed this dial without difficulty, leaving an empty cylindrical space in the door, and turned my attention to the handle and its associated dial. Now hearing the characteristic clicks as I turned that dial, I knew the safe would open and I awoke.

The antecedents to the dream, at least as I interpret it, lay in the frustration of creating a matrix in which to hold diverse ideas together and to integrate them. The dream answered my dilemma with an obvious answer: Marshall my resources, cut through the labyrinth, and move directly to the heart of the matter. Rather than providing a conceptual key, the dream pushed me forward, emotionally. I would finally address that which I had abandoned 40 years before.

My *Requiem* philosophically situated Freud's destabilized ego as a stage towards its total dismantling. That story, which forms a major theme of postmodernity, not only would explain the instability of Freud's project as a clinical endeavor, but would further explain the standing of the ego in current discourse about the postmodern mind. Of course, there is no such *thing* or singular idea as the 'postmodern mind,' but clearly a constellation of formulations and attitudes comprise a body of thought and perhaps a loose confederation of orientations and moral sentiments under that rubric. These collectively have an identification that most would discern as very different from 'the modern mind,' and Freud holds a pivotal philosophical position in this second, older configuration, albeit he transformed its precepts of personal identity and the psychological ego, which supports that understanding. So instead of studying post-Freudian psychoanalytic critiques (a subject exhaustively examined), my story cuts to the philosophical infrastructure of his theory and offers a history of a revolt against Freud's very notion of subjectivity and conception of the ego.

In my earlier work, Freud's humanism and the ethics of his project were described, and in *Requiem* I explore the fate of his humanism in the wake of the further deconstruction of the ego. How might we comprehend his venture to better address the implicit promises held within its program of psychic emancipation? And related to that particular interest, how is moral agency configured within a postmodern context? That is the underlying issue, for beneath the tumultuous seas of configuring subjectivity lie the deeper currents of defining an ethics for the moral agent whose foundations have been fractured. The philosophical attack that converged on psychoanalytic theory highlighted Freud's own views about the "arrogance of consciousness" (Freud 1910, p. 39; Tauber 2014a, b), but the respective rationales of the assault his critics leveled were based on a set of different concerns: Freud understood that the "arrogance" was the mistaken construal that the conscious ego assumed about its own dominance of the unconscious mind, which was enacted in mediating the reality principle. Identifying the rationalization of defensive mechanisms, Freud foreshadowed a broader critique of normative reason that arose from diverse philosophical criticisms and psychological studies. His interlocutors targeted the "arrogance" of a misapplied scientific faculty (the ego's autonomous representing function) to

psychic life, where they argued that the subject-object dichotomy so effectively employed in the natural sciences simply does not hold for describing the inner mental life.¹⁸ Disputing the very basis for claiming autonomy of an agent capable of interpreting psychic states, Heidegger, Adorno, and Wittgenstein each targeted Freud's philosophy of mind and deconstructed the remnants of the psychoanalytic ego. Specifically, each attacked Freud's representational model of the mind, which not only provides a theme that unifies their diverse philosophies, but also exposes the Achilles Heel of Freud's entire project. Many have accused psychoanalysis of failing to fulfill its own standards of objective practice, because the efforts to capture subjectivity do not have the same epistemological standing as describing objects found in the external world. *Requiem* explains the philosophical basis for that assessment from three very different philosophical perspectives.

With the rejection of a representational model of the mind, Freud's interlocutors offered a provocative critique of psychoanalytic theory, but more importantly, those who would commit "egocide" (Rogozinski 2010, p. 5) and re-define selfhood in the post-Freudian era, found a most suitable target in the psychoanalytic ego. The dispute is not about the vulnerability of the ego that must rely on its own rationality, for all recognized the limits of deliberative thought about the subjective, but rather the disputants held divergent views regarding the standing of Reason itself: Freud followed a strategy of *analysis* and potential mastery; his philosophical critics dismissed the attempt as misguided. From that position, the repercussions of the ego's fall is not so much about the scientific basis of psychoanalysis, nor its therapeutic efficacy, but rather the powerful implications of defining agency and the self-consciousness that undergirds behaviors as essentially defrocked of rational pretensions. The normative floats on the surface of a deep cultural sea, which undulates beneath conceptions of mind and the agent who *thinks*. Freud, despite acknowledging the precarious status of the rational ego, still endorsed the exercise of reason as the sole resource for rescuing the future from human self-destructiveness.¹⁹ And here we see him as a social philosopher, a cautious utopian thinker who ultimately embraced human freedom or choice, which despite the force of post-humanist criticism and the shredding of its scientific conceits, remains at the core of his vision (Tauber 2012c).

¹⁸ Freud's error, a version of "modernity's Mistake," may be summarized as the faulty application of an epistemology effectively designed to investigate the external world but misapplied to inner (mental) states. To characterize subjectivity and its associated domains (ethics, metaphysics, aesthetics), which are governed by values, meaning, and affects by the same forms of reason applied to objectifying the public space (i.e., nature) conflates two ways of knowing. The distinction is crucial and Freud committed the 'sin of scientism' as he sought a "new science of the mind," when he, in fact, devised a new hermeneutics, whose objective standing received little support outside the psychoanalytic community. When the scales are weighed, with the particulars of Freudianism on one side and the combined criticisms of his science and his philosophy, classical psychoanalytic theory is based on a discarded science (Kitcher 1992) and has grievously suffered the criticism derived from modern findings.

¹⁹ "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest till it has gained a hearing. Finally, after a countless succession of rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points on which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind, but it is in itself a point of no small importance. And from it one can derive yet other hopes" (Freud 1927, p. 53).

IX

Having recently completed *Requiem*, I am still processing its lessons. Much like Hume complained of how he could not abide the philosophical skepticism into which he fell upon completing the first book of *A Treatise of Human Understanding* (1978, p. 268–9), I too face the dilemma of my findings. Confronted with reconciling two states of mind, I find myself still tethered to Freud’s modernism, while very much taken by the tides of postmodern thought that are carrying me to places only vaguely discerned. I feel like Janus, simultaneously peering towards the horizon of these distant lands and yet checking the history of what lies behind for navigating directives. In the reluctant acceptance of the philosophical critique Freud suffered, I am left to struggle with the moral consequences of an ego deconstructed. So, I join those who seek an ethics without an ontology and regard this problem as central to modern life.²⁰

For me, the challenge requires either abandoning a deeply ingrained sense of selfhood shaped by a rational morality or philosophically resurrecting agency on a different basis. I am drawn to the latter option, because the ego, bruised and even battered, still stands. The various critiques leveled against *das Ich* do not offer a compelling alternative to a self-conscious, reasoning, self-reflective, creative, yet tortured, self. Notwithstanding the reconfiguration of identity suggested by later critics, how do their arguments grip the Western imagination? The reflective voice of interpretation remains despite the efforts to characterize its articulation as an artifice. For, in the end, what—or better stated, *who*—is left after the ego is philosophically deconstructed? Admitting the pretense of a ‘me’ in dialogue with myself, this ‘self’ arising from both a cultural traditions and biological operations, nevertheless remains a *me*, one who orients ‘myself’ in the world. I cannot escape the indexicals that place me in the world. Further, despite the postmodern assault, a ‘self-ness’ serves as the operative *function* of that which is mine or identified as *me*. This adjectival approach then meets the discarded certainty of the indubitable Cartesian *cogito* by asserting a relation of *responsibility* (Tauber 1995b). In other words, actions belong to an agent, who responds to the presence of another. In the process, agency emerges; if self-conscious, then subjectivity is added; and if the subject of an action, then a dialectic develops.

No longer employed as a noun, ‘selfhood’ shifts its grammar to verbs. Leaving the parameters of selfhood to a possessive identity function embraces the postmodern view of the self as having been decentered, and/or disenfranchised from its modernist conceit, while at the same time allowing for a functional definition of *me* or *I*, for which I assume *accountability*. This orientation does not gainsay the critique of individuality as a product of both manipulative social power (Foucault), unconscious opportunism (Freud) or distorted subject-object relations (Heidegger). It makes only a modest claim: The ‘me’ (or ‘I’) serves as the variable linguistic label of a *function* of possessive identity and obligation.

Closely coupled to this understanding of selfhood, the ego, defrocked of certain conceits, continues to struggle against its Oedipal fate—not necessarily the primal

²⁰ “The problem of restoring integration and cooperation between man’s beliefs about the world in which he lives and his beliefs about the values and purposes that should direct his conduct is the deepest problem of modern life. It is the problem of any philosophy that is not isolated from that life” (Dewey 1984, p. 284). Iris Murdoch (1993) builds a parallel case on the centrality of the ego itself.

family drama, but rather the mythic struggle against the determinism of personal destiny. This ‘Freud without Oedipus’ (i.e., without the clinical explanations and psychic structures he proposed) provides a notion of moral agency that still has a powerful hold on Western identity politics. After all, psychoanalysis attempts to strengthen the efforts to achieve personal liberation, not a final escape from one’s fate (determined by personality and past experiences). Instead, the psychoanalytic vision celebrates the sense of freedom achieved in the struggle to *recognize* one’s fortune. On this view, freedom becomes an *attainment* of understanding as one pursues self-knowledge in the face of psychic determinism.

Although illusory, Freud held that belief in free will remains *necessary*. This Spinozean vision is not readily mortgaged, much less, forsaken. Indeed, despite efforts to displace the modernist metaphysics of the Western mind, the basic precept of human autonomy is not easily dislodged. On this view, the lasting influence of Freud’s work rests squarely on the meliorism derived from the effort to achieve insight, explanation, and a new equilibrium. Accordingly, Freud’s ‘error’ (see note #18) serves a larger agenda, namely by fortifying both a subjective commitment to individualized self-fulfillment, as well as making personal responsibility constitutive to agency. Rights and obligations held hand-in-hand. Assuming a moral posture in the face of contradictions hardly constitutes a unique case of efforts to support an ideological, religious, or social belief (e.g., Tauber 2009, pp. 25ff.). Strict conceptual coherence has been forfeited for a mosaic of ideas, and perhaps both acknowledging and accepting that fragmentation characterizes our era and, correspondingly, our own identities.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits any use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.

References

- Dewey, J. (1927). The role of philosophy in the history of civilization. *Philosophical Review*, 36, 1–9.
- Dewey, J. (1984). *The quest for certainty*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University press.
- Dienstag, J. F. (2006). *Pessimism: Philosophy, ethic, spirit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Douglas, A. E. (2010). *The symbiotic habit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Egginton, W. (2007). *The philosopher’s desire. Psychoanalysis, interpretation, and truth*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Freud, S. (1910). *Five lectures on psycho-analysis*. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (pp. 3–55) (trans. and ed. J. Strachey in collaboration with A. Freud, assisted by A. Strachey and A. Tyson). London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1953–74, 11.
- Freud, S. (1919). Preface to Reik’s ritual: psycho-Analytic studies. *Standard Edition*, 17, 259–263.
- Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the id. *Standard Edition*, 19, 12–66.
- Freud, S. (1927). The future of an illusion. *Standard Edition*, 21, 5–56.
- Gilbert, S. F., & Epel, D. (2009). *Ecological developmental biology*. Sunderland: Sinauer Associates.
- Gilbert, S. H., Sapp, J., & Tauber, A. I. (2012). A symbiotic view of life: we have never been individuals. *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, 87, 325–341.
- Gordon, P. E. (2010). *Continental divide. Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gourko, H., Williamson, D. I., Tauber, A. I. (Edited, translated, and annotated). (2000). *The evolutionary biology papers of Elie Metchnikoff*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. ((1972) 1993). *Dialectic of enlightenment*, New York: Continuum.

- Hume, D. ((1740) 1978). In L. A. Selby-Bigge & P. H. Nidditch (Ed.), *Treatise of human nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- James, W. ((1907) 1987). *Pragmatism*. In William James. *Writings 1902–1910* (pp. 479–624). New York: Library of America.
- Kant, I. (1996a). *Critique of practical reason*. In I. Kant (Ed.), *Practical philosophy* (pp. 139–271) (trans. M. J. Gregor). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I. (1996b). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. In I. Kant (Ed.), *Practical philosophy* (pp. 49–108) (trans. M. J. Gregor). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I. (1996c). What is enlightenment? In J. Schmidt (Ed.), *What is enlightenment? Eighteenth-century answers and twentieth-century questions* (pp. 58–64). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kincaid, H., Dupré, J., & Wylie, A. (2007). Introduction. In H. Kincaid, J. Dupré, & A. Wylie (Eds.), *Value-free science? Ideals and illusions* (pp. 3–23). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kirschner, S. R. (1996). *The religious and romantic roots of psychoanalysis: Individuation and integration of post-Freudian theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitcher, P. (1992). *Freud's dream. A complete interdisciplinary science of the mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- McMullin, E. (1983). Values in science. *PSA*, 2, 3–28.
- Murdoch, I. (1993). *Metaphysics as a guide to morals*. London: Penguin.
- Podolsky, S. H., & Tauber, A. I. (1997). *The generation of diversity: Clonal selection theory and the rise of molecular immunology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal knowledge. Towards a post-critical philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pradeu, T. (2012). *The limits of self: Immunology and biological identity* (trans. E. Vitanza). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Proctor, R. N. (1991). *Value-free science? Purity and power in modern knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, H. (1990). Beyond the fact/value dichotomy. In J. Conant (Ed.), *Realism with a human face* (pp. 135–141). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, H. (2002). *The collapse of the fact/value dichotomy and other essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rogozinski, J. (2010). *The ego and the flesh. An introduction to egoanalysis* (trans. by R. Vallier). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rossi, W. (2003). *Book review of Alfred I. Tauber, Henry David Thoreau and the moral agency of knowing*. Berkeley: University of California Press. *Isis* 94:742–743.
- Tauber, A. I. (1994). *The immune self: Theory or metaphor?* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (1995a). From the self to the other: Building a philosophy of medicine. In M. A. Grodin (Ed.), *Meta medical ethics, the philosophical foundations of bioethics* (pp. 149–195). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Tauber, A. I. (1995b). *Book review of Outside the Subject by Emmanuel Levinas* (trans. M. B. Smith). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. *Human Studies* 18:439–446.
- Tauber, A. I. (1998). Outside the subject: Levinas's Jewish perspective on time. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal (New School for Social Research, N.Y.)*, 20/21, 439–459.
- Tauber, A. I. (1999a). In T. Soderqvist (Ed.), *Book review essay of The Historiography of Contemporary Science and Technology*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 24:384–401.
- Tauber, A. I. (1999b). *Confessions of a medicine man. An essay in popular philosophy*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2000). Moving beyond the immune self? *Seminars in Immunology*, 12, 241–248.
- Tauber, A. I. (2001a). Tales of neglected (orphaned?) historiographies. In A. M. Moulin & A. Cambrosio (Eds.), *Singular selves: Historical issues and contemporary debates in immunology* (pp. 247–258). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Tauber, A. I. (2001b). *Henry David Thoreau and the moral agency of knowing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2003a). Metchnikoff and the phagocytosis theory. *Nature Reviews, Molecular Cell Biology*, 4, 897–901.
- Tauber, A. I. (2003b). The philosopher as prophet: the case of Emerson and Thoreau. *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, 10, 89–103.
- Tauber, A. I. (2005a). *Patient autonomy and the ethics of responsibility*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2005b). Medicine and the call for a moral epistemology. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 48, 42–53.

- Tauber, A. I. (2006a). Scholarship as self-knowledge: A case study. In R. E. Doel & T. Soderqvist (Eds.), *The historiography of contemporary science, technology, and medicine. Writing recent science* (pp. 128–149). London and New York: Routledge.
- Tauber, A. I. (2006b). Medicine as a moral epistemology. In R. Paton & L. McNamara (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary approaches to theory in medicine* (pp. 63–88). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Tauber, A. I. (2006c). The reflexive project: reconstructing the moral agent. *History of the Human Sciences*, 18, 49–75.
- Tauber, A. I. (2008a). The immune system and its ecology. *Philosophy of Science*, 75, 224–245.
- Tauber, A. I. (2008b). Medicine and the call for a moral epistemology. Part II: constructing a synthesis of values. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 51, 450–463.
- Tauber, A. I. (2009). *Science and the quest for meaning*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2010). *Freud, the reluctant philosopher*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2012a). The biological notion of self and nonself. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Science*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/biology-self/>.
- Tauber, A. I. (2012b). Thoreau's moral-epistemology and its contemporary relevance. In R. A. Furtak, J. Ellsworth, & J. D. Reid (Eds.), *Thoreau's importance for philosophy* (pp. 127–142). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2012c). Freud's social theory: modernist and postmodernist revisions. *History of the Human Sciences*, 25, 41–70.
- Tauber, A. I. (2013a). Immunology's theories of cognition. *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, In press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2013b). *Requiem for the ego. Freud and the origins of postmodernism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2014a). Freud without Oedipus. The cognitive unconscious, *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, In press.
- Tauber, A. I. (2014b). The rational unconscious: the Freudian mind reconsidered, *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, In press.
- Tauber, A. I., & Chernyak, L. (1991). *Metchnikoff and the origins of immunology: From metaphor to theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1962). In B. Torrey & F. H. Allen (Eds.), *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau*. New York: Dover Books.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1971). In J. L. Shanley (Ed.), *The writings of Henry David Thoreau. Walden*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1980). In C. F. Hovde, W. L. Howarth, & E. H. Witherell (Eds.), *The writings of Henry David Thoreau. A week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1997). In P. F. O'Connell (Ed.), *The writings of Henry David Thoreau. Journal Vol. 5:1852–1853*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Young-Bruel, E. (2011). Book review: Freud the reluctant philosopher. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 59, 1073–1079.